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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

February 5, 1981

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

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The Honorable Alexander M. Haig, Jr.
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In light of Secretary Weinberger's public statement that a decision is expected soon on the question of providing Saudi Arabia with equipment to enhance the capabilities of the F-15 aircraft previously sold to that country, I wanted to share with you, personally and confidentially, my thoughts on that issue.

As you may remember, I introduced the Senate Resolution of Disapproval to the original sale of F-15s to Saudi Arabia in 1978 primarily on the grounds that those aircraft posed a significant threat to the security of Israel. Although the sale was approved, many of my colleagues supported it only after receiving assurances from Carter Administration officials that certain equipment which would increase the offensive capabilities of those aircraft was not intended to be provided, then or later. While the Reagan Administration may not necessarily feel bound by such assurances, I believe that many of us in the Congress would view the abrogation or disregard of those assurances as a serious mistake and, indeed, as a direct challenge to the understandings which permitted the original sale. Only last summer, 68 members of the Senate reaffirmed their belief in the importance of those assurances and their continued opposition to the sale of additional offensive equipment.

I concur with your statement during your confirmation hearing that successful American foreign policy requires consistency, reliability, and balance. And I took comfort from your comments that this issue will require careful consultation with all parties involved, including the Congress. I hope that those principles will continue to govern your approach in the future.

While I am mindful of the need to fashion a foreign policy which is concerned with the security of the region as a whole, I want you to know my continuing personal belief that the sale of such equipment to enhance the F-15 capabilities would be inconsistent with established U.S. policy and would be harmful to U.S. interests in the Middle East.

Sincerely,

Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
United States Senator